

Douglas Drug Store
1201 East Elizabeth Street (east corner
of East 12th and East Elizabeth streets)
Brownsville
Cameron County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3274

HABS
TEX,
31-BROWN,
6-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20243

DOUGLAS DRUG STORE

TEX,
31-BROWN,
6-

Location: 1201 East Elizabeth Street (east corner of East 12th and East Elizabeth streets), Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas.

USGS East Brownsville Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 14/650420/2865440.

Present Owner: Peter L. Heinz, 1201 E. Elizabeth St., Brownsville, Texas.

Present Occupant: Hargrove's Office Supply

Present Use: Commercial use as office supply store.

Significance: The Douglas Drug Store, built ca. 1853, is typical of many nineteenth-century commercial structures still standing in downtown Brownsville. Its box-like form is decorated with simple brick dentils on a straight parapet which extends slightly above the roof line. Numerous commercial establishments have been located here, including William Douglas' "New Drug Store," and J. L. Putegnath's Botica del Leon.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Cameron County Deed Records suggest that the building was erected between 1852 and 1853. In 1852 its lot had been acquired for \$200 and the next year this same lot and "the buildings and improvements thereon standing" were mortgaged for the sum of \$3,000.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The Douglas Drug Store is located on the northwestern half of Lot 8, Block 63 of the Original Townsite of Brownsville. The title to the property on which the Douglas Drug Store is located is complicated because two separate buildings were located on the northwestern and southeastern halves of the lot, and because one of the earliest references to the title dates back to the period when the title to land in the Original Townsite was under dispute. The following references to the title of this lot can be found in the Cameron County Clerk's Office, Brownsville.

1848 Warranty Deed dated January 17, 1849, recorded in Volume B, pages 10 and 11. George Work sold his rights to Lots 8 and 9 to Jeremiah W. Powers including "brick house bar fixtures, furniture out houses appurtenances & c" on Lot 8 for \$556.75.

1852 Warranty Deed recorded October 18, in Vol. E, pp. 429-430. E. Basse and R. H. Hord sold Lot 8 to Blas Martinez for \$200. (The price of an unimproved lot in the Original Townsite of Brownsville was \$150-\$200 at the turn of the century.)

- 1853 Mortgage recorded October 8, 1853, in Volume E, pages 615-616. Blas Martinez mortgaged the northeast corner of 12th and Elizabeth Streets (site of Douglas Drug Store) "being 23 feet in front on Elizabeth Street" and "embracing the buildings and improvements thereon standing," to Margaret Maxan for \$3,000. The mortgage was released on October 6, 1854, recorded in Volume E, page 615. (Local historian A. A. Champion stated that Blas Martinez was married to Margaret Maxan's daughter, Lodoviski.)
- 1854 Warranty Deed recorded October 6, 1854, in Volume F, pages 185-186. Blas and Lodoviski Martinez sold Lot 8 to William Douglas for \$2800. After 1916, the title to the property becomes complicated due to the number of heirs. Various members of the Douglas family retained an interest in the property and the Garibay family was associated with the property from 1917 to 1942. It was eventually sold for taxes to Kenneth Faxon (Volume 313, page 557-558).
- 1943 Warranty Deed dated February 20, 1943 recorded Volume 319, pages 406 and following. Harry L. Scott acquired Lot 8 from Kenneth & Bernadine Faxon for \$10. According to Peter Heinz, Sr., Scott was responsible for clearing the title to the property.
- 1943 Warranty Deed with Vendor's Lend recorded April 17, 1943, in Volume 319, pages 589 and following Harry and Ethel Scott sold the northwest 23 feet of Lot 8 to Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Hargrove. The Scotts immediately transferred their Vendor's Lend to Peter and Helen Heinz.
- 1977 On July 29, 1977, Peter Heinz, Jr., acquired full possession of the northwest 23 feet of Lot 8.
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: None known.
5. Original plan and construction: The 1885 Sanborn Map of Brownsville shows a one-story brick structure extending northeast from Elizabeth Street along 12th Street to the alley at the rear of the property. A wooden covered walkway extends approximately eight feet out over the front facade. The building is divided into four segments running back northeast from Elizabeth Street along 12th Street. The first segment northeast of Elizabeth Street is the only section having a wooden cornice as well as a firewall extending 18" above the roof along the side facade. This section was separated from the next by a brick partition with an opening in the center. This next section has a metal cornice and 12" firewall along the side facade. The first two sections both have a slate or tile roof. The last two sections are difficult to read on the copy of the map but they appear to be one-story structures 11 feet high along the street and alley with a courtyard between them and the two-story building on the southeast portion of Lot 8.

6. Additions, alterations:

The 1894 Sanborn Map of Brownsville shows the structure virtually unchanged. The two sections of the building closest to the alley appear identical to those on the 1885 map.

On the 1906 Sanborn Map, the partition between the two sections of the building closest to Elizabeth Street has been removed and the covered walkway now extends over the walk on 12th Street as well as Elizabeth Street, stopping about one-third of the way back from Elizabeth Street on 12th Street.

The last two sections of the building appear only slightly altered. From this map it seems clear that an L-shaped section divided into two parts extended around 12th Street and the alley and that a courtyard existed to the south of this section between it and the adjoining building on the same lot. Elements which appeared to be structures within the courtyard on previous maps are gone. The only alteration noted on the 1914 Map is the extension of the covered walkway along 12th street to two-thirds the length of the store.

In 1892 the store had doors along 12th Street. These openings have subsequently been closed up. The wooden overhangs which created covered walkways around the store are also gone. Mr. Peter Heinz, Sr., stated that the interior courtyard was cemented over at this time and the interior part of the rear of the store constructed in its present condition. According to Heinz there were display windows on the northwest wall of the building along 12th Street which were closed about 1960. Plate-glass windows have been installed at the location of the original openings in the southwest facade along Elizabeth Street.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

William Douglas, the original owner of the store, was born in Ireland about 1820. He came to the Brownsville area with the third Indiana Volunteer Infantry in the Mexican War of 1846. He was first married to Caroline Chamberlain from Connecticut who died October 28, 1866. They had two children, Henry and William J. Douglas. His second wife was Margaret Koch who was born in the Rhine River region of Germany. They had six children: Walter, Arthur, Mary, Charles, Agnes, and Philip. Douglas was a member of the Presbyterian Church and in 1861 was elected alderman for Brownsville's First Ward. Like many other Brownsville citizens he moved to Matamoros, across the river from Brownsville in Mexico, during the Civil War. In 1866, he was an agent for the Alamo River Steamboat Company. In 1867 he was still living in Matamoros but by July 1869 he had built a house on the northwest corner of 7th and East Elizabeth Street in Brownsville. Douglass died on September 15, 1889, at the age of seventy.

Local historian A. A. Champion pointed out two announcements or advertisements for the Douglas Drug Store at its opening which appeared in the June 26, 1861, issue of the Rio Grande Sentinel, a bilingual newspaper published in the 1850s and early 1860s:

NUEVA BOTICA

Los infrascritos tienen gran Placer de anunciara sus amigos y al publico que han abierto una NUEVA BOTICA para vender por mayor y menor, en la esquina la Calle Elizabeth en frente a la Ranca, en al muy conocido punto que coupaba el Sr. R. J. Lawlor y compañía. Nuestro surtidos es grande y escojido con mucho cuidado en Nueva York, Filadelfia y Nueva Orleans y pueden contar en que son genuinas y frescas. Se esponderan a precios muy moderados ventas prontas, y ganancias razonables, y medicinas frescas, esta es nuestra Mote. Medicos, Droguistas y Comerciantes, sus orgenes prescripciones estan respectuosamente solicitadas que seran cuidadosamente preparadas y colocadas.

W. DOUGLAS Y CA.

Brownsville, Febrero 20 de 1861

NEW DRUG STORE *

The undersigned take great pleasure in announcing to their friends and the public, that they have opened a new Drug Store, Wholesale and Retail, on the corner of Elizabeth and 12th streets, at the old and wellknown stand of R. J. Lawler & Co. Our stock is large and selected with great care in New York, Philadelphia, and New Orleans, and can be depended on fresh and genuine and will be disposed of on reasonable terms. Quick sales, reasonable prices and Fresh Medicines, is our motto. Physicians', Druggists' and Merchants' orders and prescriptions respectfully solicited, and will be carefully prepared and put up.

W. DOUGLAS & Co.

Brownsville, Texas Feb. 20, 1861

Mr. Champion stated that Douglas opened the drugstore because Joseph Klieber, associated with a rival political party, had bought the Webb Drugstore which had been the only pharmacy in Brownsville since 1852. This explains why Douglas called his shop the "New Drug Store."

* Translation aided by Heriberto Brito.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century the Botica del Leon or Drugstore of the Lion was operated in this building by Joseph L. Putegnat, whose father had once clerked for Douglas. The business stayed at the corner of Elizabeth and 12th streets until 1891 when it moved to the Brown Block on the west side of Elizabeth Street between 11th and 12th streets. In addition to operating a drug store, Putegnat was State Oil Inspector in 1891. He also spent two years dealing in horses in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, from 1886 to 1888 during which time the Botica del Leon was closed. He was the foreman of the Protection Hook and Ladder Company, No. 1, a volunteer fire department organized in 1875 and having thirty members in 1893. He was also a Sergeant in the Brownsville Rifles, a company attached to the First Regiment of the Volunteer Guard of Texas. (Chatfield, pages 22, 25, and 27.)

W. H. Chatfield stated that the doors of Botica del Leon always had "the 'latch string on the outside' for the accommodation of (the) . . . community." Although the information about the store in Chatfield's Twin Cities of the Border was written about the new location in the Brown Building, it does furnish an idea about the Store's operation. According to Chatfield, "beside the full line of pure drugs, chemicals, patent medicines, surgical instruments, etc., and the abundant stock of toilet articles, paints, oils, and brushes, there is a fine display of stationery, leather goods, statuary and bric-a-brac" An advertisement placed by Putegnat in Twin Cities . . . states, "Prescriptions carefully compounded, by the proprietor in person at any hour of the day or night." (Chatfield, pages 22 and 45.)

In addition to the druggist Putegnat, a number of other tenants occupied the store. H. Lazare leased lot 8 from William Douglas for three years in March 1887. (Cameron County Deed Records, Vol. 1, pages 539-540.) A photograph taken by Robert Runyon between the years 1895 and 1925 shows the building identified as El Nuevo Mundo, the New World, and its sign announced "verdadera barata, sombreros de Lelas en General." Additionally, for many years during the early twentieth century the store was the Garibay Clothing Store. An oak cabinet from that store is used for storage by the present establishment, Hargrove's Office Supply Store, which has been here since 1943.

According to the Texas Medallion on the side of the building face, the first federal court in Brownsville was held in the back room by Judge John Watrous. Mr. A. A. Champion has stated that this is controversial and that he has yet to find documentary proof to support this traditional assumption.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: A photograph in Twin Cities of the Border, page 4, captioned "Twelfth Street, corner of Elizabeth" shows a corner view of the store as it appeared before 1891. (An awning here

identifies the building as Botica del Leon which moved to a different location at that date.) The openings along 12th Street as well as the overhang creating a covered walkway along Elizabeth Street can be seen in this photograph. Both have been subsequently removed.

An undated photograph of the building taken by Robert Runyon appears in the 1976 Brownsville Bicentennial Calendar for the month of June. This calendar was published by the Brownsville Historical Association and is available for purchase at the Stillman House Museum, 1305 East Washington Street, Brownsville.

2. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Interviews with Mr. A. A. Champion, 642 W. Levee Street, Brownsville, Texas, the week of July 26, 1977. Mr. Champion has conducted extensive documentary research into the nineteenth-century history of Brownsville. He shared the information in his files on William Douglas and answered questions about the Drug Store in the nineteenth century.

Interview on August 8, 1977, with Mr. Peter Heinz, Sr., of 1234 Russell Street, Brownsville, Texas. Mr. Heinz has been associated with the building since 1942. He furnished information about twentieth century use of the building, title problems, and alterations.

File on the "Brownsville Courtroom" at the Texas Historical Commission, Box 12276, Austin, Texas 78711.

b. Secondary and published sources:

Chatfield, W. H., The Twin Cities of the Border. Originally published in 1893. Reprinted in 1959 by the Harbert Davenport Memorial Fund, the Brownsville Historical Association, and the Lower Rio Grande Valley Historical Society.

Rio Grande Sentinel, dated June 26, 1861, no page numbers. Microfilmed copy in the collection of A. A. Champion, at 642 West Levee Street, Brownsville, Texas.

Sanborn Maps of Brownsville, Texas, dated 1885, 1894, 1906, and 1914.

Prepared by: Betty Bird
University of Virginia
Project Historian
1977

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This small brick building is an example of a mid-nineteenth-century commercial space in Brownsville.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: This three-bay, one-story, rectangular building is approximately twenty-five feet across the front by one hundred thirty-five feet in length.
2. Foundation: Foundation is brick throughout.
3. Wall construction, finish, and color: Walls are treated with fine stucco or plaster over brick, and painted ivory with a sill band between the window sill level and street level, painted beige. A corbelled, denticulated, brick cornice with blocking courses above it, extends across the front facade and approximately two-thirds of the side facade. Below the cornice on the front are three cast-iron attic vents. There is a belt course below the vents which runs across the front facade and extends around the side, and becomes the parapet cap at about the last one-third of the building length. There is a three-course corbel across the rear of the building at the roof line.
4. Structural system, framing: Construction here is of brick load-bearing walls with frame of wood, and wood columns.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance, recessed in the center of the southwest facade, opens into the sales area. The doorway has wooden surrounds and a one-light transom above the door. The door is of wood, framed with a deep sill rail, and has a glass panel. There is a mail slot in the sill rail.

The rear door at the alley leads into a stock room. The double opening has wood surrounds and a concrete sill. The tall pair of wooden doors have a molded panel in the lower section with a six-light glass panel in the upper section. There are removable wood panels across the glass, on the exterior.
 - b. Windows and shutters: There is a display window on each side of the entrance, with the one on the left side (opening to the northwest also), separated by a corner wall. Each display window has an inner face with full glass panel set at an angle to the front. They extend to meet the recessed entrance door. A single, fixed glass panel in both front and side is wood framed from sill height. There is a painted band across the top of the glass with advertising in it.

At the northwest facade there is a two-light, fixed-sash, wood display window, with wood surrounds and sill. It, too, has a painted band across the top of the glass.

Several openings on the northwest facade have been blocked in and plastered over, as evidenced by the cracking around the plaster on the exterior. One such opening has six-over-six-light, double-hung wood sashes exposed on the inside.

6. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The flat roof, with slight slope for drainage, has a built-up asphalt covering.
- b. Cornice, eaves: There is a brick parapet around the two street facades, an adjoining building on the southeast and a metal gutter across the rear, with metal downspout.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: The entrance in the center of the southwest facade opens into the sales area. There is an engaged column on each wall about half-way down the room. At the northeast end are two doorways, one on each side, leading to a small office and a stockroom, respectively. The stock room has a double opening leading into a rear stockroom. There are two small toilets on the southeast wall in the rear stockroom.

2. Flooring: Concrete is used for floors, some covered with asphalt tile.
3. Walls and ceiling finish: Walls are of painted plaster over brick. There is a gypsum-board partition with diagonal wood lattice around the top enclosing the office.

Ceilings are of mineral-fibre tiles, with a ceiling molding at the wall.

4. Doorways and doors: There are two doorways in the sales area, one leading to the office and the other to the stockroom. These double openings have wood surrounds and a transom above, with iron bars across it. There are no doors.

Other doorways are of wood, with wood panel doors.

5. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating: Modern heating and air-conditioning equipment.
- b. Electrical: Modern fluorescent lighting fixtures are used.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The building in the central business district, sits on the northeast side of the street, facing southwest, at the east corner of the intersection of E. 12th Street and E. Elizabeth Street. The surrounding structures are commercial. A concrete sidewalk extends around the street sides, and a paved alley lies at the rear of the building.

Prepared by: John P. White
Texas Technological
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Project Supervisor
1977

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

At the suggestion of a national preservation consultant, Ellen Beasley, this project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, in cooperation with the Brownsville Historical Association and the Brownsville City Planning Department. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, the project was completed during the summer of 1977 at the Historic American Buildings Survey field office, Brownsville, Texas, by John P. White (Associate Professor, Texas Technological University) Project Supervisor; Betty Bird (University of Virginia) Project Historian; and Student Assistant Architects Scott Deneroff (University of Maryland), Susan Dornbusch (University of Virginia), Matthew Lowry (University of Pennsylvania), Eduardo Luaces (University of Florida), and Alan Willig (the City College of the City University of New York). Special assistance and support were provided to the HABS team by Mrs. Mary Simmons, Mrs. Sally Fleming, Miss Theresa Champion, and Mr. Calvin Walker of the Brownsville Historical Association; and by Mr. Mario Moreno, Mr. Richard Waldman, Mrs. Graciela Salinas, and Mr. Larry Brown of the Brownsville City Planning Department. Archival photographs of the project were made in February 1979 by Bill Engdahl, of Hedrich-Blessing, Chicago, Illinois. Editing and final preparation of the documentation was carried out in the HABS Washington office by Lucy Pope Wheeler of the HABS professional staff.